

Address by Admiral Stansfield Turner
Director of Central Intelligence
VADM William Read Retirement Ceremony
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At the turn of the century, the American philosopher William James said,

"The world is only beginning to see that the wealth of a nation consists more than anything else in the number of superior men that it harbors."

It is to the credit of the U.S. Navy that it has harbored Bill Read, a most superior man, for these past 30 years.

I have known Bill Read for most of those years. (Personal anecdote) I believe Bill exemplifies those rare qualities which we try to nurture in all of our officers. One of these qualities of great importance today is the intellectual capacity to think imaginatively.

I happen to believe that being a naval officer is as intellectually demanding a profession as any I know of today. That is why young officers should seek to emulate Bill Read--to follow in his footsteps of not just embracing the past--old ideas, outmoded concepts, comfortable fallacies.

In the field of tactics Bill Read has blazed new trails. His reshaping of the destroyer squadron organization...has stimulated emphasis on the tactical side of our responsibilities. It may sound odd to some to say that we need intellects like Bill to develop our tactics. Even

many of us in the profession still conceive of tactics as primarily matters of bravery and command decisions. We do not think often of the increasing intellectual content of tactical decisionmaking. And yet, look at just one example.

The skipper of a major combatant ship like this today finds that his fighting capability is largely resident in his computer program. The program limits the captain's options no matter how brave or ingenious he may be. If the captain does not understand the assumptions, the limitations that some civilian put into those programs, he may find that in the moment of battle what he wants to do simply cannot be done.

During the Vietnam war we sent guided missile cruisers to the Gulf of Tonkin. Their computer programs were designed to control the Terrier missile system in defense of a carrier task force in the open reaches of the ocean. In fact, those cruisers hugged the North Vietnamese coast and attempted to control the air space over the land. Few, if any, skippers realized that their missile control program was not built for that and that when the lights lit up and said, "free to fire," it was not so. The missile envelope over land is markedly different than over water. Today ship captains must possess the intellectual capacity to understand all the details of our sophisticated weapons systems and sensors to get the most out of them. That's what it takes to be a good tactician; that is exactly what Bill has encouraged in the Surface Force Atlantic.

Bill is also a super manager and the managerial decisions our Navy faces also require more intellectual strength than we often acknowledge. Bill and I once.... How, for example, do you compare the alternatives of whether a new ship should have one propeller or two? Common sense tells any ship driver that he would prefer maneuverability, redundancy, and speed of two. But, how much are those characteristics worth in dollars? Why do you need to maneuver much at sea today when you have long-range weapons? Are you likely to have battle damage that would put out one screw and not damage enough else of the ship to disable it? And while speed is always nice, what if you could have 12 one-shaft ships instead of 8 two-shaft ships for the same price? Isn't there a reasonable probability you might be in the right place in the first instance anyway?

These are difficult tradeoffs. But even more difficult is the intellectual process of displaying the alternatives on issues like this in ways that will be fair and clear, and will truly assist decisionmakers in considering their options. Does most of the staff work we see today encourage and facilitate this ability to judge alternatives? The general answer is no. One of the greatest farces that has been perpetrated on the U.S. military is the concept of completed staff work. Completed staff work is really a way of eliminating the manager from the decision process by giving him only one choice. Rather than laying out issues and discussing all reasonable options, "completed staff work" often attempts to drive a decisionmaker to a particular decision.

Besides tactics and management, the third element of being a naval professional is to be a strategist; and Bill Read has perhaps excelled most here. Strategic decisionmaking also has much more intellectual content today. Why do we need a Navy at all? We all know why. Alfred Thayer Mahan told us that we needed to control the seas and he gave us a prescription for doing it. This amounted to having the best battle fleet around and being able to destroy the enemy's battle fleet in head-to-head engagements. In fact, not long after Mahan wrote, he was hopelessly outdated, first by the advent of the submarine and then by the aircraft. But despite this, all navies prepared for World War I in the image of Mahan by building large battle fleets. And, in that war the only head-to-head engagement, the Battle of Jutland, decided nothing. The sea war was decided out on the sea lanes of the North Atlantic between the U-boats and the convoys.

Despite these lessons of World War I, generations of naval officers continued to point to Mahan as the ultimate strategist. In the disarmament conferences of the 1920s, they focused on the battleships and overlooked the submarine. In preparation for World War II they refought the Battle of Jutland. The potential of the submarine was ignored and the aircraft carrier was looked on simply as an adjunct for the battleship. And again, of course, World War II proved that Mahan was wrong.

Because of the lack of successors to Mahan; because we have failed to rise to the intellectual challenge before us; even today we lack a coherent, relevant philosophy of naval strategy--of naval warfare. This is not unrelated to the fact that in the last decade the United States Navy has decreased from 1,000 to 460 ships and is only buying enough today to sustain a navy of about 330.

Why am I saying this at a retirement ceremony? Because today the Navy is losing a man who understands these issues. He had made a significant contribution. Young officers and enlisted men and women who are here must accept the challenges that Bill Read has faced so squarely for 30 years and take up the baton to act on them as has this superlative officer and exemplar.

Bill, you have been an inspiration to all of us. From those who truly care about the Navy, we thank you for your ideas, your direction, your courage.

Marty - helpmate - navy wife - your sacrifices have made those contributions possible.

I wish both all happiness.

To Vice Admiral Dave Johnson - Yours is a challenging task. You are now the controller of the values of the very heart of the Navy. I envy you. With full confidence in your considerable abilities, I wish you every success as you prepare to lead a force of vessels manned by our Navy's greatest asset--her people. God speed!

29 June 1979

If we're to give the best advice to decisionmakers, we need to review our current reporting procedures. There is a consistent, informal canvassing of potential customers to ascertain their interest in a particular report. This, however, places a filter on our perspective. Our capability to predict is severely hampered by such concentration on the question of whether or not information is useful for a current problem. Analysis comes after the fact but the ability to recognize where one is at a point in time is conditioned by the continuous flow of information, some of it necessarily not of great moment.

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